

Memorial and Obituary for Carolyn P. Boyd

Discussion published by Andrew H. Lee on Monday, September 28, 2015

This is the collectively authored obituary for Carolyn P. Boyd. There will be a Memorial Tribute and Celebration of Her Life on November 1 at 2:30 p.m. at the UCI's University Hills Community Center. The address is 1083 California Ave, Irvine, California, U.S.A. 92617. Please RSVP to cbramlet@uci.edu.

CAROLYN P. BOYD

(1944 - 2015)

Carolyn P. Boyd, a world renowned scholar of modern Spain, died at her home in Irvine, California on July 19, 2015, after a long bout with cancer. She was 71 years of age. Born in La Jolla, California, she was raised in Idaho and received her undergraduate education at Stanford and her doctorate at the University of Washington. Widely recognized for her reinterpretation of the origins of the Spanish Civil War, she was also highly acclaimed for signal insights into the course and meanings of Spanish national history and identity. She enjoyed a long and distinguished career as a professor of history and a respected administrator, first at the University of Texas at Austin and then at the University of California, Irvine.

As a historian of modern Spain, Boyd played a major role in the dramatic reorientation of the field in the decades since the death of Franco. Characterized by exceptionally broad reading, painstaking archival research, and keen analytical skills, Boyd's work meticulously set about to rethink many of the central problems of modern Spanish history, notably the role of the military in politics and the reasons for the troubled trajectory of Spain's nation formation. Her first book, *Praetorian Politics in Liberal Spain*, published in 1979, demolished the long held notion that it was endemic and institutionally irreconcilable antagonisms between civilian politicians and meddling officers that destabilized parliamentary government and ultimately led to Civil War. Instead, she demonstrated that the governing political parties of the nineteenth and twentieth century themselves "created the praetorian army that later destroyed them."

In another pathbreaking work appearing in 1997, *Historia Patria: Politics, History, and National Identity in Spain, 1875-1975*, Boyd deeply probed the study and teaching of history in modern Spain, placing these in social and political context. She argued persuasively that the failure of Spaniards to reach consensus on the facts and meaning of the country's past both reflected and helped perpetuate weak political institutions (and mobilizations) and persistently strong regional identities (especially among the Catalans and Basques), thus hindering the development of an overarching national identity. The book won recognition far beyond the confines of Spanish history, and remains to this day a landmark study in the broader history of European education and culture. That Boyd's first two books were each rapidly translated into Spanish, a rare honor for the work of an American historian, further indicates their considerable significance.

Boyd brought to her research and writing a profoundly sympathetic appreciation of Spanish culture,

combined with an impatience with and firm rejection of mythmaking, whether it originated on the right or on the left of the political spectrum. In well-worn stereotypes about Spanish national character she saw interesting cultural significance but little interpretive value. The modern history of Spain, Boyd believed, was distinctive but not deviant, and her scholarship was central to an emerging consensus that would situate developments in the Iberian peninsula within the broader contexts of European and Western history. While her sensibilities and insights often verged on the poetic--few Spanish historians have been more profoundly affected by art and literature--her writing was always clear and concise, free of mystification, obfuscation, or jargon. Indeed, Boyd embodied the virtues most prized by historians--persistence, discipline, linguistic facility, rigorous analysis, and clarity and precision of expression.

Considering that she entered the field when there were relatively few English-speaking scholars and even fewer women working on modern Spain, Boyd's accomplishments rise to a still more impressive level. In Spain itself historians had been practically unable to examine the nation's recent past because of the constraints imposed by the Francoist regime and its ideology. The education of those coming of age during the dictatorship consisted of a one-sided indoctrination in national history as seen by the victors of the Civil War. As a young woman in Franco's Spain, pursuing research on the traditionally masculine topic of the military, Boyd played a pioneering role in the rediscovery of the Spanish past. Following the demise of Franco in 1975 she was a key figure in the expansion of cooperative scholarly work among Spaniard and foreign historians.

In her later work Boyd focused on the complex issue of historical memory and commemoration in contemporary Spain, on how the past is perceived and how history is imagined or manipulated. Here too her work, in the form of a series of important articles, fell at the cutting edge of current historical research. Most recently she was chosen as one of only two North American contributors to the massive history of Spain (*Historia de España*), published in Madrid in 2013. She served as co-author for the twelfth and final volume in the series devoted to "histories of Spain: visions of the past and the construction of identity" (*Las historias de España: Visiones del pasado y construcción de identidad*), a volume which was in fact largely inspired by her own seminal book, *Historia Patria*.

Testimonies about her life have invariably noted that she was universally liked and an exemplary teacher, mentor, colleague, friend, and administrator, always generous with her time, knowledge, wisdom, and counsel. She is survived by her husband, Frank D. Bean of Irvine, California, her brother Paul M. Boyd, of Boise, Idaho, her sons Peter J. Bean and Michael F. Bean, of Austin, Texas, and New York City respectively, her step-children Alan M. Bean and Deborah Copas of Austin, and her two step-grandchildren. Memorial donations may be made to the Orange County Women's Chorus, of which she was a valued and enthusiastic member (www.ocwomenschorus.org/support-us).